

BENNY FRIEDMAN

CLASS OF 2005

Quarterback - 5-10, 183 - Michigan

1927 Cleveland Bulldogs
1928 Detroit Wolverines
1929-1931 New York Giants
1932-1934 Brooklyn Dodgers
(eight playing seasons)

Benny Friedman, a two-time All-America quarterback at Michigan, played with the Cleveland Bulldogs (1927), Detroit Wolverines (1928), New York Giants (1929-1931), and the Brooklyn Dodgers (1932-1934). When he turned pro, the college football sensation was greeted with fanfare that was exceeded only by the media attention given future Hall of Fame halfback Red Grange when he turned pro in 1925. A versatile player and field general, Friedman could run, kick, and most importantly pass the ball better than any player who preceded him and for many years better than those who followed him.



During his first four pro seasons, Friedman's play was nothing short of remarkable, earning him first-team All-NFL honors each season. Although official statistics were not kept, he is believed to have completed more than half his passes, at a time when 35 percent was considered a very good performance. From 1927 through 1930 Benny tossed 11, nine, 20, and 13 touchdown passes, leading the league each year. In 1928, he led

the league in both rushing touchdowns and touchdown passes; no other player has ever accomplished that. His 20 touchdown passes in 1929, including four in one game, were both NFL records for years.

Following the 1928 season New York Giants owner Tim Mara purchased the Detroit franchise just to secure the services of Friedman. Mara's decision was based not only on the quarterback's league-leading performances, but also on his all-important gate appeal. He proved to be an asset in both categories, not only for the Giants, but for the emerging pro league as well. Although very durable, a knee injury coupled with the rigors of serving as an assistant coach at Yale, Friedman's productivity dropped in 1931. Still the player-coach managed to earn third-team All-NFL honors that year and second-team All-NFL honors in 1933.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame:

February 5, 2005

Enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame:

August 7, 2005

Other Members of the Class of 2005:

Dan Marino, Fritz Pollard, Steve Young

Full Name: Benjamin Friedman

Birthdate: March 18, 1905

Birthplace: Cleveland, Ohio

Died: November, 23, 1982 at New York, New York

High School: East Tech (Cleveland, OH)

Pro Career: Eight seasons, 81 games

Uniform Number: #1 - with the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers (also briefly wore #6 with Cleveland Bulldogs, #21 with Detroit Wolverines, #17 and #26 with Dodgers)

CAREER STATISTICS

			Passing						Rushing				Scoring		
Year	Team	G	Att	Comp	Yards	TDs	Int	Rating	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	XP	FG	Pts.
1927	Cleveland	13				11						2	11	0	23
1928	Detroit	10				9						6	19	0	55
1929	New York	15				20						2	20	0	32
1930	New York	15				13						6	10	1	49
1931	New York	9				3						2	0	0	12
1932	Brooklyn	11	74	23	319	5	10	28.9	88	250	2.8	0	5	1	8
1933	Brooklyn	7	80	42	594	5	7	61.1	55	177	3.2	0	6	0	6
1934	Brooklyn	1	13	5	16	0	2	7.1	9	31	3.4	0	0	0	0
Career Total		81	167	70	929	66	19	60.2	152	458	3.0	18	71	2	185

Additional Career Statistics: Receiving: 5-67

ALL-LEAGUE TEAMS

All-NFL:

1927 (GB, SM); 1928 (GB, SM); 1929 (GB, EY, SM);
1930 (GB, EY)

All-NFL Second Team:

1933 (OF)

All-NFL Third Team:

1931 (OF)

PRO BOWLS

The Pro Bowl series began following Friedman's career.

YEAR-BY-YEAR TEAM RECORDS

(League/Division Finish in Parentheses. The NFL aligned by divisions beginning in 1933).

1927	Cleveland Bulldogs	8-4-1	(4th)
1928	Detroit Wolverines	7-2-1	(3rd)
1929	New York Giants	13-1-1	(2nd)
1930	New York Giants	13-4-0	(2nd)
1931	New York Giants	7-6-1	(5th)
1932	Brooklyn Dodgers	3-9-0	(6th)
1933	Brooklyn Dodgers	5-4-1	(2nd)
1934	Brooklyn Dodgers	4-7-0	(3rd)

Friedman's record for career touchdown passes stood until 1942 when fellow Hall of Famer Arnie Herber surpassed Friedman's total of 66 TDs.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Excerpt from Total Football II (Harper Collins, 1999)

Michigan's Fielding Yost said he was "one of greatest passers [and] smartest quarterbacks in history," and Red Grange said he was the best quarterback he ever played against. Benny Friedman was one of the greatest players of the 1920s according to his contemporaries, his coaches, historians, and, yes, Benny Friedman.

No doubt, Benny's insistence on his own greatness right up to the day he died actually hurt his case. Critics looked for pins to prick his boasts. He became tiresome -- even though he probably was right.

At Michigan, Friedman was a clever, risk-taking quarterback, a dangerous runner, an adequate kicker, and -- most important -- the top passer of his time. Yost, his coach, also said he was the best defensive back around, but Benny was primarily a put-points-on-the-scoreboard player. Twice an All-America, only Grange and perhaps Ernie Nevers surpassed him in mystique by the time he graduated to the NFL.

In his first four seasons, he was phenomenal. Although official statistics were not kept, Benny appears to have completed more than half his passes (at a time when 35 percent was good) and each season launched many more touchdown passes than anyone else. He was the league scoring leader in 1928, and Tim Mara bought the entire Detroit team just to get Friedman for his Giants.

Friedman's teams were winners, but he could never quite bring them in first. A leg injury slowed him in 1931, and after that college coaching duties limited his appearances. The arrival of Sammy Baugh made a lot of people forget how good a passer Friedman had been, but he never forgot himself.

